

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DHA-02 L-03 H-01 NEAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7086

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEOBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 4113

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM PINT TS

SUBJECT: GOT BLOCKS CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC LIBERTIES

REF: TUNIS 3062, TUNIS 3873, TUNIS 3912

1. SUMMARY: GOT BLOCKED THE CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC LIBERTIES SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN TUNIS JUNE 10. LPOLICE OFFICERS AT AFRICA HOTEL DENIED ENTRANCE TO PROPOSED CONFERENCE SITE TO ABOUT 40 PARTICIPANTS INCLUDING FORMER GOT MINISTER OF DEFENSE HASSIB BEN AMMAR AND FORMER U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK. TUNIS-BASED AND EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENTS AND FOUR REPRESENTATIVES OF TUNIS DIPLOMATIC CORPS OBSERVED THIS WHOLLY PEACEFUL EVENT. RAMSEY CLARK MET LATER IN MORNING WITH AMBASSADOR AND REQUESTED HIS ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA. AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED CLARK MEET WITH HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR., AND OFFERED TO RECOMMEND THAT BOURGUIBA, JR., RECEIVE HIM. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CONFERENCE ON PBULIC LIBERTIES, SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN TUNIS AT THE AFRICA HOTEL JUNE 10 AND SPONSORED BY A
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GROUP OF PROMINENT TUNIS PROFESSIONALS, WAS BLOCKED BY THE GOT. DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY POLITICAL BUREAU MEETING HELD ON JUNE 6 TO DISCUSS CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE WITH LIBYA REPORTEDLY DECIDED AS WELL NOT TO ALLOW CONFERENCE TO TAKE PLACE. CONFERENCE SPONSORS WERE NOTIFIED ORALLY BY INTERIOR MINISTRY OFFICIALS JUNE 8 THAT THEY COULD NOT HOLD CONFERENCE. ABOUT 40 PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS GATHERED

AT THE HOTEL AFRICA AT 9:00 A.M. JUNE 10 BUT WERE MET MY
ABOUT FIVE UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS WHO DENIED THEM ENTRY.
HASSIB BEN AMMAR, FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER AND PROMINENT
LIBERAL/SOCIAL DEMOCRAT LEADER; BEJI CAID ESSEBSI, FORMER
INTERIOR MINISTER; AND RAMSEY CLARK, FORMER U.S. ATTORNEY
GENERAL, WERE AMONG THE PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS. THEY
REMAINED AT THE HTSLTZRER ABOUT 30 MINUTES AND THEN DEPARTED
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SFULLY. OTHER THAN BRIEF CHANTING OF "LIBERTY, DEMOCRACY"
BY GROUP OF CONFERENCE SUPPORTERS, EVENT AT AFRICA WAS QUIET.
SMALL CROWD OF ON-LOOKERS GATHERED BUT WAS EASILY AND PEACE-
FULLY DISPERSED BY POLICE. TUNIS-BASED AND EUROPEAN COR-
RESPONDENTS AND FOUR MEMBERS OF TUNIS DIPLOMATIC CORPS
(U.S., U.K., CANADA AND SWEDEN) WITNESSED THE EVENT.

3. GOT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INFORMATION MUSTAPHA
MASMOUDI TOLD PRESS AT HIS REGULAR FRIDAY NOON BRIEFING
THAT THE CONFERENCE HAD NOT BEEN AUTHORIZED BY THE
CONCERNED GOT AGENCY, THAT THE SPONSORING GROUP WAS NOT
LEGALLY RECOGNIZED BY GOT AND THAT "ILLEGAL MEETINGS BY
ILLEGAL GROUPS WILL NOT BE TOLERATED."

4. ON JUNE 9, CONFERENCE SPONSORS SOUGHT TO HOLD RECEPTION
AT AMILCAR HOTEL IN SUBURBAN CARTHAGE, BUT POLICE PREVENTED
THIS MEETING AS WELL. TRAFFIC WAS BLOCKED ON HEAVILY
TRAVELED ROADS WITHIN ONE-HALF MILE OF AMILCAR TO SEAL
OFF VICINITY OF HOTEL. HASSIB BEN AMMAR, WHO WAS ALSO
ON HAND FOR THIS EVENT, THEN WENT TO TUNIS-CARTHAGE AIRPORT

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WITH LARGE FOLLOWING TO RECEIVE RAMSEY CLARK.

5. SHORTLY AFTER EVENT AT AFRICA HOTEL ENDED, RAMSEY CLARK
CALLED THE AMBASSADOR TO DISCUSS GOT GLOKAGE OF CONFERENCE.
CLARK WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE, PROFESSOR FAULK FROM
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSOR SCHAAAR OF N.Y.U.
CLARK EXPRESSED HIS DISAPPOINTMENT THAT GOT HAD NOT ALLOWED
HOLDING OF CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY NON-VIOLENT AND
RESPONSIBLE ELEMENTS OF TUNISIAN SOCIETY. HE SAID HE
WANTED TO BE RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT BOURBUIBA TO DISCUSS
THIS ISSUE WITH HIM AND URGE A MORE TOLERANT ATTITUDE
TOWARD THE CONFERENCE SPONSORS. HE REQUESTED AMBASSADOR'S
ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT.
AMBASSAODR NOTED THAT BOURGUIBA'S HEALTH HAS SEVERELY
RESTRICTED HIS SCHEDULE AND THAT GOT OFFICIALS ARE
CURRENTLY PREOCCUPIED WITH NEGOTIATIONS WITH LIBYA OVER
CONTINENTAL SHELF. WHEN CLARK SAID THAT HE MAY HAVE MET
BOURGUIBA, JR., IN WASHINGTON, AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT
CLARK CALL ON HIM TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE APPOINTMENT WITH

PRESIDENT. AMBASSADOR OFFERED TO RECOMMEND TO BOURGUIBA, JR., THAT HE RECEIVE CLARK. MR. SCHAAR ASKED AMBASSADOR IF USG WOULD TAKE A POSITION ON BLOCKAGE OF PUBLIC LIBERTIES CONFERENCE IN LIGHT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT WHOLE ISSUE OF PROPER USG RESPONSE TO POSSIBLE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IS UNDER STUDY IN STATE DEPARTMENT AND HE COULD NOT SPECULATE ON WHAT OUR REACTION MIGHT BE. CLARK AND HIS ASSOCIATES THEN RAISED ISSUE OF TRIAL OF BEN SALAHISTS THAT WILL COMMENCE JUNE 13 AND EXPRESSED OPINION THAT ALLEGED CRIMES OF THOSE UNDER INDICTMENT WERE POLITICAL OFFENSES AND THAT GOT CASE AGAINST THEM FOR HAVING THREATENED SECURITY OF THE STATE WAS WEAK. CLARK, WHO WILL DEPART TUNIS JUNE 12 FOR LONDON, SAID THAT THE FRENCH CHAPTER OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WILL SEND AN OBSERVER FOR THE BEN SALAHISTS' TRAIL.

5. SHORTLY AFTERWARDS AMBASSADOR TELEPHONED BOURGUIBA, JR., WHO
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SAID HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO RECEIVE CLARK.

6. WE WILL FOLLOW THIS ISSUE CLOSELY AND REPORT SIGNIFICANT
REACTION TO DEPARTMENT.

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